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IV.—*Supposed Junction of the Rivers Gambia and Casamanza, on the Western Coast of Africa.* Communicated by R. W. Hay, Esq. V.P. Read 10th December, 1832.

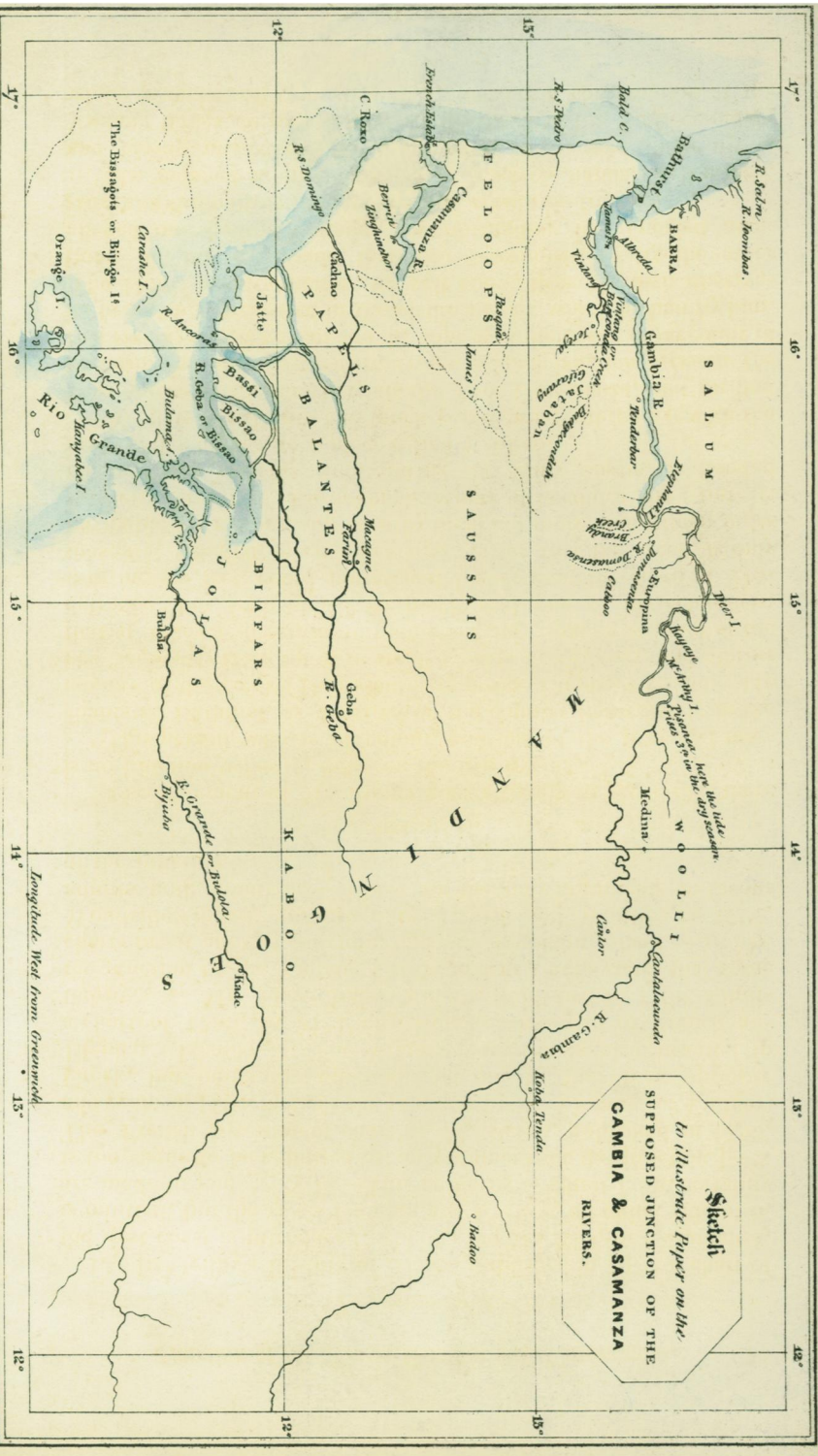
It may be briefly stated to the Geographical Society that in consequence of its becoming known, some years ago, to his Majesty's government that the French had determined to form a settlement in the Casamanza, steps were taken, then and since, to ascertain whether this river was not a branch of the Gambia; and some geographical information has been thus collected which may not be without interest to the society.

In 1828 his Majesty's surveying vessel, *Hecla*, proceeded to the western coast of Africa, and Captain Boteler was directed to give his particular attention to the inquiry proposed to him respecting the two rivers.

The result of Captain Boteler's inquiries 'induced him to consider it a fact that there is no communication whatever between them navigable to aught else than a very small canoe, which possibly, perhaps, at the highest tides, by means of intersecting rivulets and drains, might effect a junction; yet even in favour of this supposition (Captain Boteler says) there is no argument other than vague rumours and unsubstantiated reports, which are totally at variance with the statements of the most respectable natives, who, in their extensive mercantile pursuits, must be aware of the fact, if it does exist, and who well know that the publicity of such would be to their interest, by facilitating the conveying of their commerce through the territory of the Feloops, a wild and plundering tribe.'

Captain Boteler's conclusion was not founded, however, on actual survey; he reported upon hearsay only. He considered boat-work in the Casamanza (especially for surveying purposes) as highly dangerous, and he apprehended that if he had pursued any further steps than those which he took, they would have been attended with a sweeping mortality, without any apparent prospect of obtaining the object in view. His observations will therefore be received with a certain degree of reserve; and this paper will conclude with a communication very recently received from the Lieutenant-Governor at the Gambia, detailing the particulars of an excursion which he had undertaken up the river Gambia, in which, although he did not make any conclusive discovery in regard to the junction of that river with the Casamanza, yet he acquired a stronger conviction than ever of its existence.

Captain Boteler's observations as to the supposed junction are as follows :—



In favour of it.

1. 'In Ogilby's History of Africa, published in 1670, a chart of the west coast is introduced, wherein the De Rha, or Casamanza, is omitted, but the rivers Gambia and Cacheo, on either side of it, are made to join. [N.B.—This authority is entered, but certainly is too vague to be admitted as an argument for the junction.]—2. The French government chart of M. Bellin, published in 1753, and again in 1765, notices the junction by the Vintang (or Vintam) Creek, but omits the other alleged one by the creek opposite Elephant Island.—3. The Vintang junction is also inserted in a chart of 1756, by M. Philip Buache; likewise of French authority.—4. Mr. Thos. Jeffery's chart, published in 1768, admits the junction by the Vintang Creek, and in a note states that some charts insert another junction, opposite Elephant Island.—5. Mr. Woodville's chart, published by Laurie and Whittle, in 1797, admits both junctions.—These are the only arguments in favour of the junction.'

Against it.

'The statement of Mr. Joiner goes strongly to prove that there is no junction whatever between the two rivers.

'This person, who is of colour, and one of the principal merchants at Bathurst, is a native of the country immediately in the vicinity of the creek (Domaseusa) opposite Elephant Island. He has frequently been up it in small vessels and canoes, and affirms that it takes a direction into the interior; that it is deep at the entrance, but soon shoals so much that one of his schooners, drawing six feet, could not ascend higher than the town of Domaseusa, situated seven miles up. After this the creek is only navigable for canoes, and even by them not more than fifteen miles further, abreast of Europennah, where it becomes dry; but its channel still remains, and, during the rainy season, is flooded many miles higher, to a place called Cabboo.

'In 1810 Mr. Joiner had much commercial intercourse with the Portuguese at Zinghinchor, in the river Casamanza, and on that account was anxious to *discover an inland junction between the two rivers*, which he was led to hope was the case, on account of its being so represented in Woodville's chart, which he had by him. The Domaseusal junction, he well knew, from his own observations, did not exist, and therefore determined to try the other alleged one by the Vintang, notwithstanding the repeated assurances of the natives that the attempt would be fruitless.

'He manned a large canoe with fourteen hands, well armed, and having provisioned them for seven days, sent them up to Vintang Creek, to prosecute the exploration of the Badjecoondah, which branches off from it, and is, in fact, a continuation of the

same stream under a different name. The canoe, however, after a minute search, returned unsuccessful; and as, independent of the result of their exertions, the authority of all the natives they met tended to prove, in the fullest degree, that there was no junction between the two rivers, the idea was altogether given up, and Woodville's chart, in that respect, considered to be erroneous.

'Since this period Mr. Joiner has often ascended the Badjecoondah, and from his personal experience thus gained, he feels convinced that it does not join the Casamanza. The creeks which branch off in that direction from the Badjecoondah, are not larger than ditches or rivulets, and have been explored; and even had they not been so, the direction of their tides would alone convince a stranger that they are merely tributary streams to the Badjecoondah. And this statement perfectly coincides with the information I have gained from various others, who possess a local knowledge of the place, and more especially from Mr. Hunter, a gentleman residing at Bathurst, who, for some years, has been in the habit of ascending the Gambia and its branches on wood-cutting expeditions, which are carried up to so great a distance, and in such bye places, that it appears strange that an idea could be entertained that a junction exists between the two rivers. In fact, the old charts are the only evidence in favour of it, which evidence I consider may now be set aside by the experience of the present day; and certainly, as far as regards the fact of the Casamanza being a branch of the Gambia, I feel confident that it is not the case (unless further up than the charts give it), and almost so that there is not even a partial junction, passable in the smallest canoe, during the floods of the rainy season.

'From Jereja the Badjecoondah winds up to a town bearing its name, opposite to Tenderbar, and almost four hours' walk from it. Thus high it is navigable, but beyond is of no service, for although canoes can proceed further up to Soongahdoo, and beyond that to Pahcow, yet the stream is so inconsiderable and winding that the natives prefer travelling by land. It is also, in this distance, fordable in many parts; and even not much above Badjecoondah it is so narrow that the natives pass over it on a plank.

'This positively known direction of the Badjecoondah towards Tenderbar does not agree with the old charts, and consequently is an insurmountable argument against their correctness, as is also, in great measure, the equally known fact of the diminutiveness of the stream above Badjecoondah, which, on that account, could not well be imagined to pass through the extent of country necessary to connect it with the Casamanza; and even admitting that it was, it could by no means constitute the Casamanza to be a branch of the Gambia.

'Were there a junction, by any other channel than those hitherto

entered in the old charts, between the rivers Gambia and Casamanza, it is impossible that it could be withheld from general publicity, for it would be too valuable to remain unknown, or be disused. And any one who visits this part of Africa would feel convinced that no creek, that could in any way be turned to account, would be overlooked by the small French coasting vessels, which, in search of shell-lime, penetrate the most obscure drains accessible at the highest floods, and continually present to the passing strangers a mast arising above what would appear to be an impenetrable thicket.

‘After all, even allowing that a junction was proved, or, indeed, that the Casamanza was actually a branch of the Gambia, there yet remains a fact, altogether unnoticed, in the late Lieutenant-Colonel Lumley’s letter on the subject. The Portuguese have been established for centuries on the south bank of the river, and consider it indisputably to be their own.

(Signed) ‘THOMAS BOTELER,
‘Commander of H.M. Sloop Hecla.’

Extract of a Despatch from Lieutenant-Governor Rendall, dated Bathurst, River Gambia, June 30, 1831.

‘I availed myself of the offer made to me by one of the merchants of the settlement (Mr. Chown), to proceed in his vessel to the Vintain river, and having understood that opposition would be made to our passage, I took with me Ensign Fearon, and a small party of men. Messrs. Grant and Bocock, also, kindly offered their assistance, and the latter brought with him two of his vessels, in order to make a better appearance.

‘On the 7th of June I reached the town of Vintain, and having in vain endeavoured to procure an interview with the Alcaide, I gave him notice of my intention, and proceeded up the Jataban branch (being supposed to be the largest), and on the 9th arrived at Gifarang, a distance of about forty miles, where the pilots refused to take the large vessels any further.

‘The King of Jataban had heard of my approach, and on the 10th held a grand palaver of the chiefs and people of his country, during which he declared his great satisfaction at seeing white men, and complained of the injustice of the Alcaide of Vintain, who had so long kept the mouth of the river closed against the traders; that he hoped I would now keep it open, and as he had the real right of the river he gave it to me for that purpose.

‘Being anxious to discover the communication between this river and the Casamanza, I started the next morning at day-light in one of the boats, and found that there was water enough for small craft as high as Badjacoonda, twenty miles above Gifarang,

where I met the small vessel I had sent on for the purpose of going as high as it could ; but the master, believing the reports of the natives, that it would be dangerous for him to attempt passing some rocks just above, had anchored there. We, however, continued our route in the boat, sounding the whole way, and always finding a channel of two fathoms, for more than five miles, when the banks gradually grew narrower, with mangroves on each side, until at last they impeded the action of the oars.

‘ The channel being still very deep we persisted for some time, and I was at last compelled to return, without discovering the junction of this river with the Casamanza, although more persuaded than ever of its existence. The prevalence of the tornadoes and rains, and the impossibility of keeping those gentlemen’s vessels from their trade, prevented me from making another attempt at that time ; but I hope, hereafter, to have an opportunity of exploring all the creeks of this valuable branch of the river Gambia, the mouths of ten of which we passed, going up and down ; and although most of them are very wide at their entrances, the pilots could not tell us where they terminated. Some they had been up a considerable distance in canoes, and others they had never attempted.

‘ On the 14th of June I returned to the town of Vintain, and after a very angry conference, the Alcaide submitted entirely to my wishes ; and then declared that he had been obliged to make his show of resistance before his people, otherwise they would have said he had sold me the country.’

Mr. Rendall concludes by stating that ‘ his views of advantage to the general trade of the river, by this voyage, have been amply realized, eight or nine vessels having ever since been employed trading backwards and forwards from this settlement to the ports of Gifarang and Badjacoonda. Some of the most experienced of the traders have declared the opening of this river to be the most fortunate event that has happened since the establishment of this settlement, as it must be the means, hereafter, of cutting off a great portion of the trade to Casamanza, Cacheo, and Bissao, and at once enable them to trade direct with the Jollas, whose wax is perfectly pure, and who have had hitherto no outlet for half their produce.’

Should any further information be obtained in regard to the supposed junction of the Gambia and the Casamanza, it will be communicated to the Geographical Society.
